Strategic Plan
2017-2018

Last Revised September 5, 2017
VISION STATEMENT

Partnerships between Faculty, Students and Administrators are part of the core mission of the Graduate Student Association (GSA). Since its inception in 1990, the GSA has grown to represent the almost 5000 graduate scholars and their interests. The GSA strives to speak as a powerful voice on both a local and national stage to support the interests of our graduate student population. For the GSA to succeed as an organization and in its mission we will model our strategic plan from the 5 pillars of organizational success. First is TRUST, second is SMARTS, third is TEAMS, fourth is TASTE and fifth is STORY.

Trust is important to support the GSA’s mission. The organization needs trust from not only its member but also those we work with. Trust is so important because it is key in the organizations commitment to culture and is a promise shared between our internal and external partnerships. I want to build trust with all of you through open communication and transparency.

Smarts are also important to support the mission of the GSA. As graduate students every one of us has acquired a substantial amount of knowledge. But there is always more to learn. The goal is to build professional development and to expand our mission to the community. As well-educated and knowledgeable people, we should go out into our community and share our wealth of information with all. Through partnership with the Undergraduate Student Association we will also be able to share our knowledge and experience with the undergraduate population to act as mentors to a younger generation.

Without support from others we face an uphill battle. Teams make this job much more obtainable. Teamwork is a way to accomplish big goals at the University. Myself and the other student leaders at UAlbany have agreed to work together to push forward an agenda of resolutions to help all students. By speaking as one unified student voice we can accomplish changes in policy at the University and SUNY levels.

Taste, what is taste? Taste speaks to our brand. A large initiative last year that I hope to build upon in the coming year is the visibility of the GSA. Through branding, social and professional development events promote an active graduate student body that knows what the GSA does and how we help the students.

Lastly story, which is the most unique part of the GSA, is about knowing where we come from and understanding possible futures. The GSA was organized in 1990 to represent the interests of all graduate students here at the University at Albany, stories of how we have fulfilled that goal in the past and how we plan to serve the needs of the graduate students in the future.

Dylan Card
GSA President
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2017 Executive Board for the Graduate Student Association (GSA) hereby proposes a strategic design to inform the Assembly of Executive Board intent for the upcoming academic year, and to attest as to how the Executive Board intends to proactively facilitate the mission statement of the GSA.

The strategic plan is based upon: (1) advocacy, (2) professional development, and (3) service, as they relate to the graduate student population at the University at Albany. This proposal is submitted to the Assembly as an outline of objectives, assessments, and resources needed to satisfy executive action.

While reading this document, the Assembly is encouraged to consider how student activity fee monies should be used to facilitate this organization. All members of the Assembly with questions and comments are encouraged to attend the first assembly meeting of this academic term at 6pm on September 8th, 2017 in the Hall of Fame Room at SEFCU Arena to voice their comments for further discussion.

Note that this plan is not intended to circumvent GSA bylaws, but rather it is designed to allow the flexibility required to carry out advanced plans which may otherwise not fit into a specific job description. This allows the Assembly as a whole to actively participate in any portion of GSA activity which is of interest to them.

As the Equity and Inclusion Chair, I have carefully reviewed the objectives within this document, and approve its contents and objectives. It is my personal belief that meeting these objectives is essential to the future of this organization, as they are aligned with promoting the core values of the GSA. I welcome discussion and suggestions pertaining to all aspects of this strategic plan.

Sincerely,

Jaime Coffino,

GSA Equity and Inclusion Chair
President's Agenda:

Advocacy-

Goal # 1: Campaign and organize for key advocacy efforts related to graduate student life.

- Support and continue the advocacy of the GSA. Collaborate with local and national student organizations for strength in increased support, such as NAGPS, SUNYSA and other Graduate Student Organizations throughout New York State.
- Maintain diligent advocacy strategies supporting Childcare services for all student families.
- Continue to push the University to do more to address students with food insecurities. Exploring viable efforts to eliminate food insecurities is vital to this objective.
- Collaborate with University supportive services for marginalized and underrepresented communities. It is important that we help provide these groups with resources and a voice on issues that affect them.
- Work with executive board members to create meaningful resolutions to be implemented at the University and possibly SUNY.

Goal # 2: Increase the visibility of the GSA.

- Attend departmental graduate student orientations in order to help graduate students become aware of the valuable resources provided by the GSA. A quick postcard with information about the GSA will be created and distributed.
- Continue the “Your Student Fees At Work.” campaign to help facilitate the GSA’s efforts to help graduate students identify the benefits of their student organization with the support of RGSOs. The Public Relations Director and Programming Chair will collaborate in these efforts for further support.
- Continue to engage the graduate student population through social and professional development. One major goal is to mix the graduate students and get them to interact with those outside of their departments.
- Provide assessment of how the Student Activity Fee is spent at the end of the academic year.

Goal # 3: Strengthen relationships with local and national student organizations in order to increase the power of the GSA’s voice.

- Continue to develop a strategic affiliation with the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students (NAGPS). The GSA will ensure that students attend the NAGPS Legislative Action Day (LAD), Regional, National and Professional Development Conferences.
- Continue to support the State University of New York Student Assembly (SUNY SA) advocacy efforts. GSA will encourage graduate students to get involved by considering SUNY SA leadership opportunities. This will further enhance collaboration within the larger SUNY system student advocacy agendas.
• Develop a symbiotic relationship with the Student Association to provide a powerful student voice at UAlbany. We will also create a UAlbany Student Leaders group designed to discuss where we can help one another and provide a direct body for the administration to respond to the status of our resolutions.

Goal # 4: Grow our independence from the University.
• Understand that the University can be a helpful and resourceful ally while also recognizing the importance of the autonomy of the GSA.
• Gain control of our credit card, which has always been controlled by Student Involvement.
• Gain access to the All Graduate Students Listserv.

Professional Development-

Goal # 1: Build the Brain.
• Using the Office 365 Brain build an archive of files to help future members of the GSA ensure the success of the organization. Files will include how to successfully navigate the request for proposal for the insurance bidding or any other bidding process, budget tracking, and individualized account groups for each committee.

Goal # 2: Update our documents to ensure that the GSA can be an effective organization and provide the most benefits to its members.
• Update and continue to improve the Grants and RGSO guidelines to provide more concrete language to ensure unfluctuating enforcement of policies in a manner that benefits the organization.
• Update the Constitution and Bylaws of the GSA. Currently the language within these governing document is not consistent with the manner in which the GSA operates. I would also request that the some additional powers be given to the executive board during the period in which the Assembly is not in session.

Goal # 3: Create mentorship opportunities for RGSOs and the GSA.
• Help mentor undergraduate students through our partnership with Student Association.
• Allow and market RGSOs to undergraduate students so that members can provide mentorship and insight to students interested in one day attending graduate school or entering the workforce.

Goal # 4: Work with SA to provide town halls on important global topics to help keep the average student educated on differing opinions.
• Host forums to discuss topics like global warming, discrimination, health care, economics, and political issues. In these town halls we hope to provide students with knowledge to make their own decisions in a balanced and respectful manner.

Goal # 5: Develop a cross disciplinary social experience for graduate students.

• Provide students with social experiences with people outside their departments, since graduate students are often binned into silos of their course of study.
• Unite Uptown, Downtown and East Campus Students.
Vice President’s Agenda:

Goal #1: Build a stronger relationship with RGSOs.

- Continue to provide support through the GSA for existing and emerging RGSOs.
- Keep and continuously update all RGSO officer contacts throughout the academic year to maintain consistent communication.
- Streamline the process for Purchase Requests to ensure quick and accurate reimbursements to students.
- Increase contact (via email or in person) with RGSO members to maintain a closer working relationship.
- Increase GSA Eboard attendance to RGSO events to foster a better working relationship with RGSOs.
- Meet regularly with RGSO leadership for feedback and suggestions.

Goal #2: Provide and maintain communication in a quick and accessible manner for RGSOs.

- Make sure all training sessions are done as early as possible for all returning and emerging RGSOs.
- Review all GSA/RGSO guidelines and procedures to make sure the language is clear to ensure expectations are met by the GSA and RGSOs.
- Change the way RGSO guidelines and forms are accessed on the website for easier accessibility.

Goal #3: Expand RGSO presence on campus and online.

- Work to increase new RGSOs by 25% by the end of the academic year. More RGSOs on campus will create a stronger, more organized graduate student body.
- Meet with graduate students in departments without an RGSO and promote the benefits that creating one will provide.
- Use social media to promote creating new RGSOs and promoting current RGSO events to the graduate student body.
- Meet with current RGSO leadership of any new non-departmental RGSO ideas.
**Treasurer’s Agenda:**

**Goal #1: Ensure the GSA does not go bankrupt.**

- Maintain Strategic Reserve.
  - Maintain a percentage of money with guidelines on how to access it.
  - Use in case of catastrophic event (i.e. GSA being sued or mandatory graduate fee being voted voluntary).
  - Increase to 50,000 USD if excess money available.
- Negotiate UAS contract.
- Look into alternate sources of income (with president).

**Goal #2: Evaluate changes to internal processes/institutional memory.**

- Create additional cloud repositories for different purposes:
  - Senators and Representatives
  - Office Managers
  - Grants Committee
  - RGSO Committee
- Work with UAS to make reconciliation easier.
  - Resolve issues with credit card reconciliation.

**Goal #3: Find a better solution for tax exempt/sales tax.**

**Goal #4: Evaluate effectiveness of the GSA funds being spent.**

- Quantify how the GSA’s money is spent (working with other Eboard members).
- Check with Assembly and Eboard if goals of GSA are being met with how the GSA’s money is being spent.


**Equity and Inclusion Agenda:**

**Advocacy-**

**Goal #1: Increase the visibility of underrepresented students in the GSA through advocacy projects.**

- Educate graduate students on the benefits of joining the GSA.
- Work with other campus programs to increase the diversity of the GSA.
- Collaborate with RGSOs to promote diversity and culture within the GSA.
- Serve as a liaison and advocate for all students in matters involving equity and inclusion.

**Goal #2: Determine and address the needs of underrepresented students in the graduate student community.**

- Educate more students, faculty, and staff about the needs of the graduate student community, including but not limited to, diversity issues on campus, food insecurity, and childcare needs.
- Analyze the data from the “Assessing Graduate Students’ Needs” survey that will allow the GSA to have the data necessary to advocate on behalf of the graduate student community.
- Provide information and obtain resources for graduate students, including but not limited to, food pantry locations and day care facilities.

**Programming-**

**Goal #1: Generate more programming and events that promote diversity.**

- Use the Equity and Inclusion budget to generate more programming for students.
- Collaborate with RGSOs to create more equity and inclusion events that promote diversity and cultural issues.
- Extend funding (as appropriate by the bylaws) to RGSOs for programming relating to Equity and Inclusion issues.
- Invite speakers that can contribute to the community and raise awareness of different cultures and issues faced by minority students.
**Programming Agenda:**

*Advocacy-*

**Goal #1:**
- To expand the GSA’s advocacy efforts through effective, collaborative, and sustainable programming.
- Collaborate with student groups, RGSOs, the GSA Eboard, faculty and staff, and university services with regard to any advocacy programs.
- Continue our support of past programs that have shown to be successful and effective.
- Create programs that engage students in social and cultural issues.

*Service-*

**Goal #1:**
- Continue serving graduate students and promoting our student body's interests.
- Promote the GSA, expanding its presence while making our mission, goals, and efforts visible.
- Table in the campus center once a month to provide knowledge about the GSA and increase awareness of our existence.
- Assist student groups/RGSOs in carrying out their events, most notably through sponsorship.
- Be open and receptive to student advocacy efforts.
- Continue GSA advocacy efforts from the past through programs and actions such as the State and National LAD’s, Sustainability Week, Ban the Box, etc.

*Programming Events-*

**In the works:**
- Highlight the many services offered and allow for social interaction between fellow students at the incoming graduate student orientation on campus.
- Host a social event following the incoming orientation that will take place during the evening at Lucky Strike. Graduate students are welcome to come and participate in the gaming and socializing.
- Continue sponsorship of the several speaker series organized by student groups as well as probably one hosted by the GSA itself.
- Begin collaborating with Student Association to plan events for social interaction between both the graduate and undergraduate student body.
- Brainstorm possible events/themes for the end of the year event.
- Aim to hold at minimum one event per month.
**Grants Agenda:**

**Goal #1: Increase accountability of the grants program.**

- Implement required paperwork after completion of a professional development event or research that includes (but is not limited to) the following information:
  - Distance traveled
  - Number of posters presented
  - Intent to publish based off work
  - Number of talks attended
  - List of any other activities
  - Importance of research
  - Whether the PD/research opportunity could have been completed without aid from the GSA

**Goal #2: Streamline the application process.**

- Remove or increase the CV page limit.
- Clarify application instructions on the grants main page.
- Ensure all online grants documents are up-to-date.

**Goal #3: Host student-led grant editing sessions.**

- Monthly grant editing sessions will be held in the GSA office; time TBD.
  - Aid in keeping yourself accountable
  - Gain editing experience
  - Obtain input from out-of-area students

**Goal #4: Shift grant review process from email to grants share page.**

**Goal #5: Track funding usage across semesters and adjust if necessary.**

- Closely monitor the number of applications through the next two semesters due to an increase in summer applications.
- Consider reducing the maximum grant amount to $500.

**Goal #6: Update GSA brain for smooth transition to next grants chairperson**
Legislative Agenda

Advocacy-

Goal # 1: Expand and increase resources for students in accordance with their identified need.

- Address Food Insecurities.
- Explore resolutions for Childcare.
- Continue Blue Ribbon Implementation (Graduate Students and Contingent Faculty Wages and benefits).
- Continue GSA Efforts: Ban The Box, Support #GradsHaveDebt2, #SaveGTOP, and #BringBackTheTap.
- Increase GSA votes (Get Involved).

Service-

Goal # 2: Enhance communication between graduate and professional student communities, RGSOs, academic departments, and University administration.

- Integrate the three campuses.
- Encourage interdepartmental activities.

Professional Development-

Goal # 3: Facilitate collaboration, networking, and professional development.

- Send representatives to take part in the NAGPS legislative action days (LADs) in the fall and spring to meet with congressional staff.
- Work with UAlbany SA to develop mentorship and collaboration opportunities between graduate and undergraduate students.